



**Regional Animal
Services of**  **King County**

A Prospective Pet Owner's Guide to Adoption

Thank you for considering a pet from Regional Animal Services of King County as a potential new companion. This document is intended to provide you with information about pet adoption, and help you make an informed decision on adoption day. Please contact us if you have any questions by emailing pets@kingcounty.gov or calling 206-296-PETS (7387). We are here to help you through the process of pet adoption, and our goal is to ensure you and your new pet are happy.

Finding the right pet

Think carefully about what you and your family want from a pet. They can be a quiet companion, an active playmate, or a family friend. Every breed of dog and cat is unique and each individual pet is different. When choosing a pet, consider these questions:

- ✿ How much time do I have to spend caring for a pet?
- ✿ Do I want an active or passive pet?
- ✿ How much of my income can I spend on a pet?
- ✿ Am I a patient person?
- ✿ Why, exactly, do I want a pet?

Pet adoption counselors are available at the Pet Adoption Center to help you choose a companion that suits your lifestyle.

Visit the Pet Adoption Center

When you have decided the type of pet that is right for you, visit the King County Pet Adoption Center in Kent. We have many animals available for immediate adoption. In some cases, the animal that suits your needs may not be available for immediate adoption. Many are pets which have strayed away from their home and must be held for three to five days in order to give their owner time to find them. A list of available pets is updated frequently at www.kingcounty.gov/pets.

Adoption day

A pet adoption counselor or animal services officer will be at the adoption center to help you choose the right pet. They are familiar with animal behavior, basic health care, customer service, and human-animal bonds.

To make the adoption process faster and easier, before you come to the Pet Adoption Center, try to do two things:

- ✿ Complete an adoption application, available on our website at www.kingcounty.gov/pets
- ✿ If you rent or lease your residence, obtain written proof from your landlord that you are allowed a pet, and bring it with you to the adoption center.

After you select a pet you are interested in, we will conduct an adoption appointment, which is often on the same day you select your pet. The pet adoption counselor will:

- ✿ Arrange for spaying/neutering of your pet, if it has not already been done
- ✿ Help you understand current laws and regulations
- ✿ Provide helpful tips on pet health and behavior

Services included with your adoption fee are:

- ✿ A King County pet license (if applicable)
- ✿ Initial vaccinations (including rabies if your pet is more than four months old)
- ✿ Spaying or neutering
- ✿ Worming of kittens and puppies
- ✿ Feline leukemia test for cats and kittens
- ✿ Microchipping

We also provide educational handouts and a leash for dogs or a carrier for cats.

Pet ownership expenses

Please consider these additional expenses that you may have after you adopt a pet.

- ✿ Food
- ✿ Toys
- ✿ Bedding
- ✿ Litter for cats
- ✿ Periodic vaccinations and health check-ups
- ✿ Obedience classes
- ✿ Emergency veterinary care
- ✿ Flea control
- ✿ Boarding
- ✿ Grooming
- ✿ Worming

Coming home

In most cases, your pet will already be spayed or neutered. Post-operative instructions will be given when you pick up your pet. Please have a leash or carrier available in order to safely transport your pet home.

Once at home, make your pet comfortable in an enclosed area. A laundry room, bathroom, or kitchen works well. Give your new pet time to adjust to its surroundings. Be quiet, calm, loving, and gentle and your pet will quickly come to love and trust you. Keep any other pets you have at a distance for a day or so. If you have young children, introduce your new pet gradually, and never leave them unsupervised with the pet.

Teach your pet the “house rules” from the beginning. For example, don’t let your pet chew on an old shoe and then scold them for chewing on your new boots. Be firm and patient, and never yell at or hit your pet.

It takes two to four weeks for a new pet to adjust to your home and family. Don’t expect your pet to be perfect right away. It takes time and care to establish trust with your pet, and for your pet to trust you and learn the rules of your home.

If your pet becomes ill, see a veterinarian immediately. Unfortunately, shelter pets may not have been vaccinated by their former owners and have been exposed to other animals on the streets and in the kennel. Early veterinary care can save your pet’s life. Please call the Pet Adoption Center at 206-296-PETS (7387) if your newly-adopted pet experiences any health problems.

What you should know about adopting a pet from any shelter or foster/rescue group

How do I choose the right pet?

Pet adoption counselors at local centers or rescue groups are prepared to help you choose a pet that suits your lifestyle. Think carefully about what you and your family want from a pet: a quiet companion? An active playmate? A family friend? Every breed of dog and cat has specific characteristics and each individual animal is unique.

Are there any requirements?

Most organizations, including Regional Animal Services of King County, require adopted animals to be spayed or neutered either before they leave the center or within a specified period of time. You will be responsible for providing regular veterinary care and for ensuring that your dog or cat is properly licensed after you take it home. Remember to provide nutritious food and fresh water for your pet. Make time for exercise, training, and play.

Are the animals healthy and well-adjusted?

Most animal organizations, including Regional Animal Services of King County, screen their animals for health and behavior problems. However, you should expect to go through a period of adjustment as your new pet becomes comfortable with a new home, family, and routine. Ask our staff for advice so you can make it a smooth transition for both the animal and your family. No pet, no matter where it comes from, is problem free or comes with a health and behavior guarantee. If you are prepared to provide your new family member with some time, training, and patience, your reward will be a loving companion.

Remember, many animals end up in shelters because their owners do not or could not provide for them. It is not the pet's fault. There are many wonderful, loving pets available for adoption.

Is it difficult to adopt?

Every organization has different policies for placing animals. The best programs are designed to ensure that animals go to responsible owners in loving homes and are prepared to make a lifetime commitment to a pet. An important part of the process is to match lifestyle and needs of the adopter with the individual pet. The adoption process is geared to help you prepare for your new family member. Spend a few minutes thinking about what type of animal suits you in order to save yourself from problems later.

The adoption process varies, but generally the adoption counselor will help you:

- ✿ Decide what type of pet is best for you
- ✿ Select a pet
- ✿ Complete the adoption application
- ✿ Provide responsible pet ownership information
- ✿ Arrange for spaying or neutering of your new pet, if necessary
- ✿ Communicate current laws and regulations for your community
- ✿ Answer any questions you have on how to care for your pet once you take it home

Do shelters or foster/rescue groups have purebred animals for adoption?

The Humane Society of the United States estimates that 25% of all dogs at local shelters are purebred. Additionally, many organizations and foster groups specialize in purebred animals. If you are interested in a specific breed, check with the Pet Adoption Center for information or for a referral to a local purebred rescue group.